

# Report

## Martin Van Buren National Historic Site

### ■ 1.0 Site Description

Martin Van Buren National Historic Site, encompassing approximately 40 acres, is located in Kinderhook, New York. Martin Van Buren was the eighth President of the United States. While President, Van Buren purchased his estate in Kinderhook in 1839 and lived there until 1862. The Van Buren mansion, named Lindenwald, is the centerpiece of the site and is a National Historic Landmark (see Figure 1). Lindenwald has 36 rooms and is an example of Gothic/Italianate architecture.

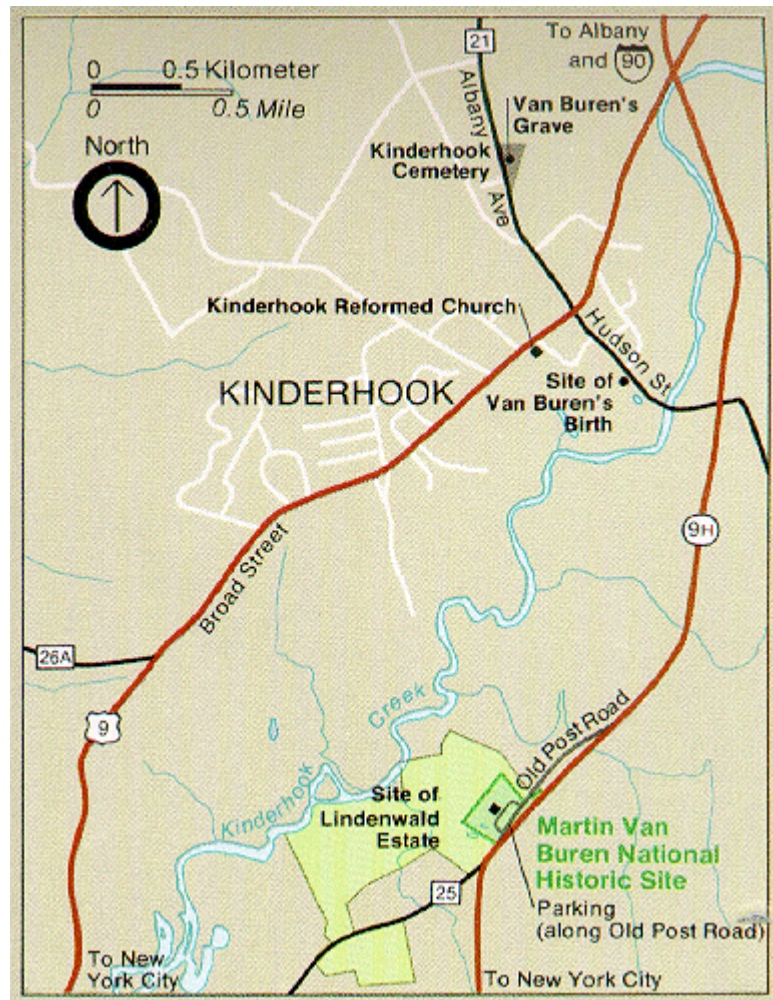
**Figure 1. Lindenwald**



The mansion has been restored by the NPS to the period when Van Buren was in residence. The site's museum collection has more than 21,000 cataloged items, including fine art, historic wallpaper, furniture, textiles, and archaeological objects. Guided tours of Lindenwald are provided by park rangers and take approximately 45 minutes. The site also schedules a variety of interpretive activities and the surrounding landscape and adjacent lands are maintained to add environmental and historic context to the lifestyle of Martin Van Buren during his period of residence. There are also several significant archaeological sites on the grounds.

A gatehouse serves as a visitor contact facility and provides a bookstore, video presentation, and restrooms. A kiosk, adjacent to the site's parking lot, provides general information and brochures. The parking lot has capacity for 30 vehicles and is generally adequate to accommodate visitor as well as employee parking.

Kinderhook is 20 miles south of Albany, in eastern New York State. It is located off of Route 9H, in proximity to Interstates 90 and 87. A map showing access to the site is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Map of Site and Access Roads**

Martin Van Buren National Historic Site is open daily from mid-May to the end of October and on weekends in November through the first week in December. Visitation averages from 20,000 to 25,000 visitors annually. The majority of visitors (approximately 51 percent) are from the greater New England region and New York State. Local visitors, from Columbia County, account for approximately 25 percent of visitation. The remainder of the visitor population is drawn from throughout the U.S., with a small percentage of international visitors. With the exception of school groups arriving by bus (approximately five percent of visitation), all visitors access the site by private automobile.

## ■ 2.0 Existing ATS

The nearest population centers to Kinderhook are Hudson, approximately 13 miles away, and Albany, approximately 20 miles away. Kinderhook is a predominantly rural community with no regularly scheduled public transportation services. As such, there are no

alternative transportation services available to the site. Use of public transportation services to the site would require taking Amtrak commuter rail service to Hudson and then a taxi to the site. The Regional Capital District Transit Authority provides bus service from Albany to southern Rensselaer County, approximately 15 miles from the site.

The Superintendent noted that the parking lot includes a bicycle rack and that organized bicycle tours travel to the site regularly during the summer months. The NPS also sponsors occasional ranger-led bike tours of the area. A rails-to-trails project is being developed from Hillsdale to Chatham along the Dutchess County Railroad right-of-way, approximately seven miles from the site.

### ■ 3.0 ATS Needs

Based on current visitation patterns and volumes, the Superintendent of the Park does not see a significant need for Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) at this time. Because of its distance from major population centers, most visitors arrive at the Park by private automobile. Alternatives transportation services have not been considered to be necessary and, according to the Superintendent, the site would not have sufficient facilities to handle large vehicles.

With regard to signage, the Superintendent said that signage was good on the New York State Thruway but inadequate on interstate highways and state roads. He indicated that the New York State Department of Transportation has not been cooperative in addressing signage needs for the site on roadways under their jurisdiction.

The Superintendent indicated that there are plans to extend the boundary of the site in the next few years, to encompass an additional 100 to 200 acres. There are also plans for a new entrance road, visitors center, and additional facilities to be developed within a seven-year timeframe. These improvements could result in increased visitation, primarily recreational visits involving snowmobiling or fishing. However, there is no need for ATS to accommodate potential increased visitation envisioned at this time.

### ■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

There is little apparent need for ATS at Martin Van Buren National Historic Site. Given current visitation levels, an absence of congested roadway operations, and substantial distance from major population centers, ATS does not appear to offer an effective alternative to private vehicles. The most apparent related need cited by the Superintendent is for better directional/informational signage to be posted on state roadways.

## ■ 5.0 Persons Interviewed

Jim McKay, Superintendent